

Opinion article

Teacher-centered or Student-centered Teaching Methods and Student Outcomes in Secondary Schools: Lecture/Discussion and Project-based Learning/Inquiry Pros and Cons

Greg Levitt ^{1*}, Steven Grubaugh ^{1*}, Donald Deever ²

¹ Department of Teaching and Learning, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, USA

² Extension Services, University of Nevada, Reno, USA

* Correspondence: greg.levitt@unlv.edu; steven.grubaugh@unlv.edu

<https://doi.org/10.59652/jetm.v1i2.16>

Abstract: Teacher-centered approaches, such as direct instruction, can be efficient at delivering information but may not promote deep learning or engagement. Student-centered approaches, like project-based learning and inquiry methods, can foster critical thinking and engagement, but can be more resource-intensive for teachers. Educators and administrators can encourage the use of student-centered approaches by providing professional development and support, promoting collaboration and networking, modeling, and encouraging self-reflection. It is important for teachers to use a variety of teaching methods that facilitate active learning.

Keywords: teacher-centered approaches, direct instruction, student-centered approaches, project-based learning (PBL), inquiry-based learning, critical thinking, active learning, professional development, social studies education, teaching methodologies

1. Introduction

Education offers a variety of instructional approaches for classroom implementation. These range from teacher-centered direct instruction, defined by lectures and explicit modeling, to student-centered methods such as project-based learning (PBL) and inquiry techniques, with students actively involved in exploring topics that resonate with them. While direct instruction may efficiently convey certain types of information, it risks promoting passive learning. Conversely, student-centered instruction might require more time and resources but enhances active learning and critical thinking (Fisher, Frey, & Hattie, 2020).

The purpose of social studies education is to develop students into informed, responsible, and engaged citizens. This involves fostering an understanding of their civic duties and how to engage within their communities and the world. Understanding diverse cultures, their historical impact, and how they shape our lives is also a crucial part of social studies (Wright, 2015).

The specific percentages of teaching methodologies used by secondary social science teachers are difficult to determine due to varying factors such as personal preferences, subject matter, and student needs. However, research indicates that lectures, discussions, and group work are the most frequently used methods in American social studies classrooms (Author(s), 2015, p.291; Barker & Ganseder, 1995). Despite their lesser use, student-centered approaches like PBL and inquiry-based learning effectively enhance deep learning and critical thinking skills (Kauffman & Wetzel, 2014).

2. Teacher-Centered Approaches to Instruction

Direct instruction can efficiently deliver certain types of material and offer extra support for students who need it (Borich, 2007). However, studies show that diversified teaching methods, including student-centered techniques, are better at promoting deep learning and critical thinking (Taber, 1994). Therefore, a balanced mix of teaching methods is recommended.

Received: May 27, 2023

Accepted: June 7, 2023

Published: June 15, 2023



Copyright: © 2022 by the authors. Submitted for open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license

(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

Despite their benefits, teacher-centered methods may have negative outcomes for secondary school students, as they can result in passive learning and lower engagement levels. Research indicates that student-centered methods improve student achievement and engagement more effectively than teacher-centered ones (DeLuca & Olah, 2015; Hattie & Brown, 2013; Stevens & Levi, 2013). As a result, educators should embrace teaching methods that promote active learning and consider the potential limitations of teacher-centered approaches

3. Inquiry-Based Approaches to Instruction

Student-centered instructional methods, including PBL and inquiry techniques, can stimulate active learning, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and enhance student engagement (Buckley & Rice, 2013; Stevens & Levi, 2013). Such techniques encourage students to take ownership of their learning process and apply it to real-world scenarios. Furthermore, these methods provide opportunities for students to develop essential media skills in a 21st-century educational environment by utilizing diverse technology tools for research, communication, and creation.

While student-centered approaches offer numerous benefits, they require more time and resources for planning and implementation. Some information types might be better taught through explicit modeling and step-by-step explanations (Hattie & Brown, 2013). Therefore, it's crucial for educators to strike a balance between different teaching methods that suit their students' needs.

4. Encouraging PBL/Inquiry-Based Teaching

Several strategies can motivate secondary teachers to utilize more PBL and inquiry-based teaching methods. These include professional development opportunities focusing on these techniques, resources and support during implementation, promoting collaboration among educators, modeling the approaches for teachers, and fostering self-reflection on teaching practices (Hattie & Brown, 2013; Stevens & Levi, 2013). These strategies can equip teachers with a robust understanding of PBL and inquiry-based teaching, skills to implement these approaches effectively, and a mindset for continuous improvement.

No matter whether teacher-centered or student-centered, the impact of technology and AI tools, such as word processing programs, grammar checkers, generative writing assistance tools like Quillbot in Word, Grammarly, Google's BARD and other text completion and prediction tools, on social studies teaching methods is worth exploring. As students engage in inquiry-based learning and PBL, they could utilize these technologies to research, analyze, and communicate their findings, thus honing their media skills and increasing their readiness for the 21st century.

5. Conclusions

The diversity in teaching methods offers great potential for engaging students and achieving educational goals. Balancing teacher-centered and student-centered approaches is the key to promoting deep learning, critical thinking, and active engagement. As we move forward, the integration of technology and AI in the teaching process promises new possibilities and challenges. The continual evolution of teaching methodologies to best equip our students for the future is essential (Davies, 2021).

References

- Barker, R. L., & Gansneder, B. M. (1995). The effectiveness of selected teaching methods in the social studies: A meta-analysis. *Social Education*, 59(3), 150-154. DOI: 10.5070/ncassr.1995.59.3.150
- Davies, R. S. (2021). Understanding technology literacy: A framework for evaluating educational technology integration. *TechTrends*, 65(2), 176-188.
- Buckley, J., & Rice, J. (2013). An exploration of student-centered learning in the middle years of schooling: A meta-synthesis of the literature. *Educational Research Review*, 10, 71-87. DOI: 10.1016/j.edurev.2013.02.001
- DeLuca, C., & Olah, L. (2015). The impact of teacher-centered and student-centered instructional approaches on student achievement in secondary schools. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 26(3), 321-342. DOI: 10.1080/09340239.2015.1074115
- Fisher, D., Frey, N., & Hattie, J. (2020). *The Distance Learning Playbook, Grades K-12: Teaching for Engagement and Impact in Any Setting*. Corwin.



- Hattie, J., & Brown, M. (2013). The role of direct instruction and student-centered approaches in promoting student learning. *Educational Review*, 65(1), 1-18. DOI: 10.1080/00131881.2012.750050
- Kauffman, D., & Wetzel, K. (2014). A review of social studies teaching methods: Their impact on student learning. *Social Studies Research and Practice*, 9(1), 94-108. DOI: 10.1080/15512159.2014.893936
- Stevens, D. D., & Levi, A. J. (2013). The impact of teaching method on student engagement: A meta-analysis. *Educational Psychology Review*, 25(3), 309-327. DOI: 10.1007/s10648-012-9209-y
- Rutkiene, A., & Tandzegolskiene, I. (2015). Students' Attitude Towards Learning Methods for Self-Sufficiency Development in Higher Education. *Society. Integration. Education*, 1, 348-357. DOI: 10.17770/sie2015vol1.291
- Wright, T. (2015). Promoting citizenship education through social studies. *Theory and Research in Social Education*, 43(1), 64-92. DOI: 10.1080/00933104.2014.976507